

Comments on the proposed conservation of the specific name of *Cliola (Hybopsis) topeka* Gilbert, 1884 (currently *Notropis topeka*) (Osteichthyes, Cypriniformes)
(Case 2808; see BZN 49: 268–270; 50: 144)

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We wish to oppose the application by Drs Cross & Collins to conserve the specific name of *Notropis topeka* (Gilbert, 1884). Our reasons are presented below.

1. Several years ago we published a paper (Mayden & Gilbert, 1989) resurrecting the species name *tristis* Girard, 1857 for the North American cyprinid fish previously known as *N. topeka* (Gilbert, 1884). We were aware at the time that the option was available by which we could have requested the conservation of the junior synonym.

2. North American ichthyologists appear equally divided on the issue of nomenclatural priority versus conservation of younger names. The name change proposed by us, for example, did not appear in the most recent checklist of common and scientific names of North American fishes (Robins et al., 1991) but was used in the Peterson field guide to North American freshwater fishes (Page & Burr, 1991). It was also used in various chapters of the recently-published comprehensive book on the systematics and ecology of North American freshwater fishes (Mayden (Ed.), 1993), which included a complete checklist of native freshwater fishes.

3. We are not opposed to name changes per se but generally support the conservation of names in cases where this would result in transposition or transferral of long-established names among species.

4. The description of *Moniana tristis* Girard, 1857, although falling well short of today's standards, was good according to the standards at the time.

5. *Notropis tristis* is not considered to be threatened or endangered, is not an important game species, is not used in biomedical research, and is not 'important' in other ways such that the name change would cause confusion among laymen or professional scientists.

6. Changes in species names of North American fishes, based exclusively on nomenclatural priority, have occurred a number of times during the past 65 years (Hubbs & Brown, 1929; Hubbs, 1935; Hubbs, 1936; Hubbs & Bailey, 1940; Hubbs & Raney, 1944; Suttkus, 1985; Böhlke et al., 1989; Mayden & Gilbert, 1989; McCosker et al., 1989). A list (held by the Secretariat), which does not purport to be complete, includes 12 examples. Of these, seven have occurred within the past ten years, of which all but the two proposed by us were accepted by Robins et al. (1991). This list is not restricted to 'obscure' species but includes such important and well-known sport fishes as the bluegill sunfish (formerly *Lepomia incisor*, now *L. macrochirus*) and spotted bass (formerly *Micropterus pseudaplites*, now *M. punctulatus*) (Hubbs, 1935; Hubbs & Bailey, 1940).

7. In some cases the desire to conserve established names has transcended what might be termed 'scientific integrity'. For example, one of us (R.L.M.) was earlier urged (not by the authors of the application), in the interest of conserving the species name *topeka*, to designate as lectotype of *Moniana tristis* a specimen of another species from the mixed syntypic series that obviously was different from the one for which the original description was intended. We are strongly opposed to such practices!

8. A far greater number of nomenclatural changes among North American fishes (mostly involving generic reallocations) have occurred in recent years as a result of continuing systematic research than as a result of strict adherence to the Code. Probably the most notable example involves the change of the name for the rainbow trout from *Salmo gairdneri* to *Oncorhynchus mykiss* (see Smith & Stearley, 1989). This change has caused considerable confusion among laymen and scientists alike, but was an unavoidable consequence of the scientific evidence presented. By contrast, an ongoing study by one of us (C.R.G.), which involves reexamination of original descriptions and extant type material of North American freshwater fishes, has revealed only four other cases of potential name changes based on nomenclatural priority. Complete nomenclatural stability among North American fishes, while desirable, is in many respects an unrealistic goal.

In conclusion, we recommend that the application to conserve the name *Notropis topeka* Gilbert, 1884 be rejected and that the senior synonym *N. tristis* (Girard, 1857) be retained, as earlier proposed by us (Mayden & Gilbert, 1989).

Additional references

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